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Subject: Special Divine Providence.

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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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SPECIAL DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”—Matt. vi., 33.

What things? They are enumerated in the foregoing context, and may be briefly summed up by saying that all secular necessities and wants will be provided for—food, raiment, shelter—in general, the means of livelihood. It is declared that the true way to gain a comfortable livelihood in this world, is not to seek our lowest wants with our highest feeling, and with our best time, and with greatest anxiety, but to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness first; and that all these other things will be drawn on in the train of that.

In this remarkable passage of our Saviour's teaching there is the clear annunciation of the doctrine of a divine and special providence. There is the declaration of God's personal care for us creatures of the human family—of the whole great family of man.

I. It is not the doctrine, here, that men should imitate birds, or that they should leave themselves, as flowers do, to the ministration of natural law. In other words, the indolence of patient waiting is not inculcated, as it might seem to some, reading hastily, that it was. The economy of this world is such, under the divine government, that the very smallest and the least powerful things are sufficiently cared for and supplied, each in its sphere; each within the reach of the appropriate instruments that are stored up in it.

The worm is organized so that it has in its nature the means of taking care of itself. The higher insects are organized so that they, also, are able to take care of their necessary wants. And the bird is organized so that it takes care of itself by the appropriate use of its own organs. And the very vegetable kingdom is organized in such a way that it feeds, and thrives, and develops, and shoots forth all its beauty.

Now, in that economy by which God has arranged the universe so that each thing in its own sphere is able to take care of itself,

and is cared for; in that economy by which the lowest and the least are amply provided for, shall God forget to take care of the highest and the best? That is the argument. It is an appeal to men's observation.

It is not an appeal of this kind: "Do not work, and do not plan; stand still and wait, and you shall be fed. The birds are cared for, and the lilies are cared for, and you shall be cared for." How is the bird cared for? He gets up early in the morning, and goes a-hunting, and looks after seeds and insects. He is cared for so that he has in his own sphere, in himself, the preparation for supplying his wants. How is the lily cared for? It pushes its roots down deeper and deeper, and pushes its stem up further and further, and draws its nourishment from earth and air. In its own blind way it *enterprises*. Such is the structure of the world, such is the divine wisdom manifested in the creation of things, that everything, from sphere to sphere, down to the lowest, is provided with means for self-care. And the Master says, "Are ye not much better than they? And has God forgotten to provide for you? Has he not clothed you with proper power? Has he not given you equal opportunity? Has he not constructed the laws of the universe in such a way that if you put forth your power you will succeed as well as all creatures below you? Are you not as wise as a worm? And shall a worm do better than you? Are you not equal to a bird? And shall a bird surpass you? Are your reason and your skill therein all for nothing?" No. By as much as you are more highly organized, by so much your chances multiply. By as much as the lowest and least thing in creation under God's administration is able to maintain itself in comfort, by so much shall the highest organization in his government be amply able to take care of itself. Therefore do not *fret*. It does not say, nor is it intimated, that you shall not work nor plan. "Take no thought"—that was translated at a time when the word *thought* signified *anxious thought*. Do not therefore be uneasy and disturbed, taking that kind of hot thought which, rolling round and round, burns wherever it touches, and by which men brood over their troubles—over those things that are not troubles, but that they fear will be; for two-thirds of all our suffering and friction in life lies in the imagination—in the things which we create for the morrow and the next day. In the present, everybody is able to stand up and bear what comes to him. It is the things that we anticipate which we cannot bear. And it is against this dread of things in the future that the Saviour utters the words, "Take no thought"—no anxiety, no fret, no worry.

It is a declaration, then, of a providence which has personal su-

pervision, which cares for the least things, and much more cares for the very highest; and which not only cares for them, but has provided means, and will maintain the provision, by which everything in its order and place shall live and be happy.

II. It *does* preclude two things: First, absorption in the lower ends of life; and, second, wear and tear of mind in the performance of worldly functions. We are forbidden to seek first our food and raiment, and our bodily comforts—that is, “first” as being transcendent in importance in our estimation. Secular prosperity ought not to be considered the chief thing for us. We are forbidden to turn all the forces of our natures downward. Inspired of God, continually directed by Providence, we are to seek something better than the perishable. We are not forbidden to seek that: for it must, in one respect, precede everything else in the order of time. That is, a man must eat, or he will not live to be a man. He must be clothed, or winter will overtake him and destroy him. He must have shelter, or the storm will bring with it suffering and disaster and death. So that in the mere matter of time we must first see to it that we have bodily life and bodily health. But first in emphasis, in priority of importance, is not the body or its wants, but that which the body carries. The soul, the character, the manhood—that is first. In seeking all our lower wants we are to do it, not with anxiety.

And here is an incidental testimony of the real spirit of the Gospel, which many have supposed to be a pain-bearing message—a system of religion in which the ascetic principle was wholesome. But according to the teaching of our Lord, we are to steer away from it. We are not to fret ourselves with anxieties. We are not to bear pains if we can legitimately get away from them. The fruit of the Spirit is joy, peace, long-suffering. The fruit of the Spirit is not pain.

III. The declaration of our Saviour here does not seem to imply a simple indiscriminating divine providence in which, or under which, the wise and the unwise, the good and the bad, all are treated alike. It is true that the sun rises on the just and on the unjust; but it does not treat them exactly alike. It is true that the rain falls on the good and on the bad just alike; but it does not do the same thing to both. The rain falls on sand, and leaves sand; and the rain falls on soil, and leaves a large crop behind it. And God’s sun rises on industrious men to equip them, and on lazy men to shame them. It sheds its light and warmth upon everything alike; but what it does, depends upon what receives it. And there is a special divine providence which comes to all men; but it does not affect them alike. To those that are working in one way, and in a lower way, it still is

a providence; but they do not make out of it, and it does not make out of them, what a providence does that comes to men who are wise, and wise morally.

The declaration is a twofold one. It is a declaration of a superintending providence, but of a providence coupled on our part with obedience to law.

Our Saviour annunciated in various ways, and by various illustrations, this law of God's provident care and government. If you want to be under this providence, and avail yourselves of it, then seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and so, or then, or thus, all things will be added to you. He does not say to men, "Stand in your places trusting in God, and he will take care of the lame and the lazy." That is man's maxim. The divine maxim is: Stand in the proper sphere, and put all your power in the noblest service, and then, so acting, God's providence will bless you in everything else. It is not an unconditional promise, or an indiscriminating providence that will release men from all care, and all sorrow, and all want. It is the declaration, by implication, of the truths of God's providence, and of the fact that it works with those that aim toward the best things. It is, in other words, identifying providence and natural law. Providence is but another name for natural law. Natural law itself would go out in a minute if it were not for the divine thought that is behind it. All laws would fall imbecile, and would perish, if it were not for the energizing will of the divine mind behind them. Laws are but instruments by which God's purposes are being worked out in the world.

Now, the implication of our Master is this: that those who work for the kingdom of God and his righteousness—that is, as I understand it, those who take their reason and highest moral faculties, and aim with them for the best purposes of life—not only will be sure to succeed in the thing itself, but will draw after it all that lies below or behind. The greater includes the less; so that if a man desires honor, integrity precedes honor; if a man desires wealth, benevolence leads to wealth; if a man desires physical pleasure, virtue is the road to physical pleasure. By the highest we find the gateway to the lowest. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and all those things which the body wants, or the lower nature wants, shall be added—and in innocuous forms; because they come under the regulating influences of the moral sense and the experienced life.

The sum of the teaching, then, is this: Let every one make his superior moral duties paramount. Then let him not fret concerning his bodily necessities and wants. God's providence is such that the

greater duty will include, when performed in its fruition, all that is subordinate. And upon this foundation I proceed to make some points of application.

1. There is a divine government that regards the welfare of individual men. This is implied in the belief of a God that sustains the order of nature. I suppose no man willfully rejects the belief of a special, present providence, taking care of every particular of our lives. No man, certainly, objects to that on account of its disagreeableness. I apprehend that those who reflectively reject it, do so with regret. It certainly is something which one should wish to believe. It is a thing to be desired. No person, in his hours of conscious weakness, when he realizes the great sphere in which he is acting, and the mighty forces that are wheeling around about him; no man, when he feels his own insignificance, can help yearning, it seems to me, to have it so. A man is baffled when he looks into the future, and sees how poor his perceptions are, and considers how imperfect his business vaticinations are. And he has the feeling that it would be transcendently blessed to be under the care of a God who thinks for us; who takes the thread of our life and spins it out to the long length necessary for our welfare; who takes the blossoms of our life, and fructifies them, and brings them to fruit.

But men say, "It does not stand to reason, and it is not consonant with observation—with what we actually see in life. For we perceive that everything comes by law; and that if a man fulfills law he is blessed, while if he does not fulfill law he is not blessed. Therefore, to preach the doctrine that there is a special providence that interferes with and interrupts law, and makes it something different from what it is, in the stated order of things, destroys the foundation of men's experience and the results of their observation." They say, "It is true that God governs the world by laws; and these laws are constant and immutable; and if men obey they reap the fruit of obedience, while if they disobey, they reap that other fruit. And as to God's substituting in their place a government of favoritism, or a specialty of direct divine volition, there is no evidence of this. All the presumptions are against it."

We do not say that. We do not say or think that the special providence of God is one that supersedes law, or that it impletes it, and makes it what it was not in its plan and economy. We do not say, either, that there is interjected between laws a divine fructifying power. We do not undertake to say what the divine providence is. But we do undertake to say that the Scripture teaches that the divine providence acts *by* law, and *through* law, and not under it nor over it, nor existing by the destruction of it. It is

simply a provision by which they who obey to the measure of their strength in their respective spheres, and take the laws, and hold the closest to them, will find that they are most brought under the benefits of divine providence. There is a sustaining power that blesses obedience.

Look, how men reason on this subject. They say, "Natural laws are all that we know—great natural laws." What do you mean by *great natural laws*? "Well, the natural laws by which the globe coheres; by which it moves; by which the seasons come; natural laws as they are interpreted through chemistry, as they are interpreted in physics; all the laws that are interpreted on the globe." But is that the only thing that the Lord made—this great globe, which is his footstool? Is not man a part of this globe? Is there not more of nature inside of man than there is outside of him? What is there that is worth anything in this world outside of man? Everything else is shucks, husks. Man is the fruit that everything has at last culminated in. All the process of evolution and development, from what theories soever you study it, culminates in man. And if you want to study nature, study *human* nature. Study mankind; and what you find of the divine economy there, is the economy of God's natural law. Not brute matter, not the great law of physical force, is the richest field for investigation; but human nature, with endless variations and combinations.

The divine providence is a providence that conforms to the laws of nature which it has made; and it conforms to the laws of the human family which are its children. What is the law then? Is it that one cannot help another? Is that the result of experience and of philosophy in interpreting the laws of nature? Cannot human nature do anything? Does every person stand still and say—the mother to the babe, and the father to the child, and the school-teacher to the scholar, and the master-artist to the artist-pupil—"I am unable to do anything for you"? Does the world go upon the theory that everything is fixed? Do men say to each other, "There are great natural laws: obey them, and you will be able to take care of yourself. Do not come to me"? Does the master mechanic, when the apprentice comes to him and says, "I want to learn this trade," say, "This trade consists of the application of natural laws: now apply natural laws, and you will learn it. Do it yourself"? Cannot the master help the apprentice? Cannot one man teach another how to make a barrel, or a hat, or a house, or a ship, or a picture, or a statue? Is it so that you cannot use natural laws? Is it so that we are walking powerless in the midst of these great agencies of matter, and that no man can make any variation in his life and experience? Does not the history of

the race show that men have the power of using natural laws—some so that they die in the poorhouse, and others so that they die in a home—some alone amid the squalor of vice, and others amidst angels from above and from below, angels of the family and angels of heaven? Is there not evidence on every hand that they who use natural laws in right ways will be blessed thereby? Is it not demonstrated to us continually, that there is a system of natural laws which adapts itself to your nature and my nature; to your will and my will; to your reason and my reason; to your power of combination and my power of combination? All the heaven and all the earth are a part of the one great natural law. And the experience of human life is this: that it makes all the difference in the world whether natural laws are used by rational, intelligent beings, free to choose or to refuse, or whether they are not used at all.

More than that, because I cannot make one hair of my child white or black, because I cannot, by crying or teaching, add one cubit to his stature, cannot I make any difference in the fate of that child? Does not my example and experience change his circumstances? and cannot I guide him? Steering amidst natural laws on every side, does it make no difference what I do to my children? While I do not destroy natural law, I stand by them, and first train them, and afterwards advise them, and then influence them; and it is my vitality that makes natural laws in the case of my children minister to their prosperity all the way down. And yet, with this in every household, with this in every store, with this in every shop, with this on every ship, with this in every phase of national life, men are standing up, white-faced, apparently without a drop of blood in their veins, or a particle of sympathy with actual life in their souls, saying, "Oh! first find out natural laws, and obey them. That is the best way. You can get at nothing else!" With this picture; with life for a perpetual parable; with that which you see in your own experience, and in the experience of others, do not you see that it makes all the difference in the world whether natural laws have a palpitating heart behind them, and a guiding intelligence over them? Do not you see that natural laws are barren and fruitless till they are taken hold of by human volition? And yet, men still reason that there is no such thing as special providence. They say, "It is absurd to teach that the divine will does anything. Natural law does everything." It is a lie! Every wise household pronounces it false. Every organized business pronounces it false.

Well, since man is so strong that he can make all natural laws serve him, he saddles them, and rides them. They are his bow, by which he projects the golden arrow of success. Natural laws are

means; they are servants; and what they do depends upon how they are used. The elements essential to a successful life are natural law, human volition, and intelligence. You cannot separate them. A man is made mighty, and is carried through civilization by their use. And will you come in and tell me that the most helpless being in the universe—more helpless than the mother or the father; more helpless than the statesman; more helpless than a general; more helpless than a bird, even, is God? Does he say, "I made the world, and set it in motion, and forgot to keep hold of it, and it has gone out of my hand, and all I can do is to wind it up and keep it a-going. I wish I had the power to control it. I see that father down there using all these wonderful agencies that I put into this world; and the laws which I ordained obey him; and he, through these instrumentalities, is able to bless his family. I wish I could bless my children on earth, too"? Away with any such idea as that God stands behind laws, and must not touch them; as that he is outside of his world, and must not meddle with it. There is nothing in this world so imbecile as such a God as that, except the fool who made the conception of it. All this show of science, all this pretentious modernism, all the wonderful revelations of natural law, and what not, which undertake to exclude God from the globe, are unphilosophical, are unscientific, and are perpetually answered by the living experiences of mankind. And we have only this to say: that if God is comparable to the average of ordinary men and women, he can meddle with natural laws; and he does, for your benefit and for mine. And it does not destroy the economy of the globe that he does do it.

Do you suppose, when wool is put on the wheel of the old housewife (some of you may remember the days when such a thing was known), and she spins it out in long threads, that it is a violation of natural law, because the wool was made to grow on a sheep's back? It was made to grow on a sheep's back at first, for him; but afterwards it was designed to serve you. And is it a violation of natural law that the shuttle carries the thread backward and forward to make cloth for you? No. Natural law is a weaver. God meant that it should be. And all through the world natural laws are not like wax candles, standing up and burning at one end, unable to stir or do a thing. They are subtle. They split into endless applications. They may be used in numberless ways. They take on human thought, and they take in human feeling. They serve those that know how to persuade them. The most subtle, and the most used of all agencies are these natural laws, by which men build up and take down; by which they bring within their reach all that the

hand can do, and all that the eye can discover. And what is it but the control of the human spirit over natural law? And is God less than a man? Is he not even as big as a philosopher?

If, then, any of you have been shaken from your confidence in special providence by the scientific sciolism of the day, I beseech of you to think again.

2. While there is a divine special providence, it does not set aside any natural law. It proceeds according to natural laws, and works by them. It is in fulfillment of our highest duties to moral law that God's providence meets us. In other words, we are not to trust to divine providence until after we have exhausted the resources of our own knowledge. And in general, divine providence will work from the law which you accept, and to which you are most obedient. The best way for a man to be rid of sickness, is to so observe natural laws as not to get sick. God's special providence is always on the side of the temperate. If you would have deliverance in any emergency, study the circumstances and conditions in which you are. Avail yourself to the uttermost of every resource. The more you exert your own power, the more you study, and the more nearly you obey all natural laws, the nearer will you come to God. It is out of those very laws that operate in the spheres where you are working that God will show his face. It is out of those laws that he will reach forth his hands; and he will employ, not simply the laws that surround you, but the laws that are in you. And your will is to be operative. God will *work in you to will and to do of his good pleasure*; and that will give you deliverance.

So, then, the doctrine of divine special providence does not set aside natural laws. Neither does it set aside human volitions. It does not say to men, "Stand and see the will of God performed for you." If God's special providence succors you, it succors you through yourself. It awakens the reason. It directs the will. It inspires industry. And he is helped of God who has learned to help himself. The doctrine of special providence does not protect indolence. On the contrary, as its conditions imply the use of one's own faculties, in the belief that God watches, and that God sympathizes, and that God helps those that help themselves, it tends to enterprise, to fidelity, and to unremitting endeavor.

3. The whole experience of the world, even from a scientific point of view, corroborates and illustrates the declaration of our Saviour—namely, that law and providence are on the side of the highest moral qualities. In other words, the man that aims at the noblest manhood will secure the most of all the things that lie below manhood.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

If you get them, you get them with a great deal more. And I say that while there is a vague acceptance of this, there is apt to be a skepticism about it. Men, just at the point where they are obliged to choose between integrity and purity of character and success, are apt to fall from the higher, and seek success first, and say, "Afterwards we will whip round and get character and integrity." But the experience of the world is that they who seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, draw the largest train of common worldly blessings with them.

A contrary idea arises from those epochs of controversy and of conflict which have originated from irregularities in life. There are times when men are thrown out of their normal conditions—times of war, times of revolution, times of persecution—when nothing seems acting in the sphere of law, uninterruptedly, and all connection between cause and effect appears at fault. Under such circumstances a man may dwell in his highest manhood, and yet dwell in the wilderness. And even in regard to what are the more exceptional cases, if you measure human life by the happiness which men enjoy in it (and that is the popular measure), I aver that the outcasts and those that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, not only obey the command to *rejoice* and be *exceeding glad*, but are gladder than men who are in worldly prosperity. Take a man who is living for the exaltation of moral principle; take a man who is giving himself for a noble cause, whatever it may be. One man gives himself to temperance; he seeks to deliver his fellows from the thrall of violent passions; and he neither amasses wealth nor seeks to exalt himself in life. He lives poorly. By and by his frugality becomes poverty. Another man has lived prosperously, luxuriously, royally. He seeks physical pleasure, and he gets it. And if you take the gauge of those two men's hearts, God knows, and you know, that the man who has lived for a great moral end, sacrificing every earthly hope, has had more hours irradiated with happiness than the man who has lived for the gratification of his lower nature. He may have been a poor man; but he has reaped more real enjoyment in the world than the self-indulgent man who seemed to have everything his own way. For the power of being happy does not consist in what you have.

"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

It depends upon how many chords there are in a man's heart which vibrate to the touch of joy; and a man who is obese in a lower prosperous life is all the time covering up those noblest chords

from which the highest happiness resounds; while a man who lives for a noble end by noble motives, and keeps his conscience clear and clean, has touched in him, by airy hands, chords that give forth music such as is never known to the lower nature.

Take a man who has run through the whole career of influence and power in politics, and in the better kinds of them—those that mix a certain sort of integrity and patriotism with the service of the State; take a man who has been advanced, step by step, and has gone through the Legislature, and has got to Congress, and has risen from the House to the Senate, and has at last come to the Vice-presidency (that is usually fatal to any man), and has perhaps touched the Presidency; take a man who gives his whole life to ambitions which lead him into circumstances where he is continually stirred up with malign feelings—take such a man, and review his history. Look at the elements of his experience—all the care, all the fear, all the collisions, all the weariness, all the disappointments, all the suspicions, all the envies, all the jealousies, all the bitter hatreds, all the fiery turmoils, all the emergencies, which he has gone through, and in which he is obliged to fortify himself, and fight innumerable adversaries, some attacking him from beneath, some pouring hot shells on his head from above, some on one side, and some on another, giving him battle. Trace the life of such a man, if living in his lower nature, and he is all his life long going to be happy, going to be happy, and going to be happy, and you will find that the happiness to which he attains is not to be compared with the happiness of the humble man who devotes his life to some benevolent object. I do not believe that of the men who rise to the highest places in public life, one in a hundred is to be envied, if happiness is to be the test. It seems to me that they are to be pitied, rather. But Garrison, who was regarded as a poor wretch, who was pitied by other men, who was accommodated with eggs that nobody wanted, who was all his life a foot-fall under fools' feet, and who was hunted up and down—I venture to say that he had more happiness, more exhilaration (more during his persecution, to say nothing of the joys of his old age) that made him say, “I would give more for one such hour as this than for a round year of common enjoyments—” I venture to say that he had more such happiness than the most successful man in political life. The fact is simple: If you play on the chords in the top of a man's head, you get music the sweetest and the longest prolonged; and if you play on basilar chords, they are dull, and snap heavily, and the music is poor in quality anyhow. If you take the exceptional cases of men that are, for the sake of integrity and principle, persecuted and cast out, there is more joy in a

prison than the palace that is over it. There was more joy on a cross than among the barbarous soldiers that had the power to crucify the Holy One. There is often more joy in men that are poor than among the rich. There is more joy in those that give their life and their everything than in those that are rich because they give nothing.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you [by and by].

I never knew a man yet who had not the means of paying for his keeping in one hotel—Greenwood. Everybody will reach that. And until you get there you need not be a bit afraid. You will always have strength to get to the grave. Men act as though they feared they would not. They fret, and fuss, and do not know what will become of them. The worst thing that can happen to you is not dying. That is the best thing that can happen to you. It is the end of all care. You need not be troubled. There is a bow that is shooting you, and that will certainly carry you to that mark. You will never stumble nor fall so but that you can get to the grave. The grave is the gate of heaven. It is the dawn of a better day. It is the beginning of an unobstructed life in which all things shall be added to you. You will always have enough given to you of food and clothes to get you to the end of life. And the nearer it comes, the better for you—often. Many and many a man lives too long, by half.

But then, while these things are true on that side, there is, another view—namely, the general declaration that spiritual morality produces temporal benefit. Is not that borne out by the inspection of society, and life itself? What have been the facts of civilization? We all admit that *civilization* is a term affecting the ennobling of human life in the individual collectively. It is a term of prosperity as applied to ages or nations.

Now, has civilization depended upon the predominance of material force, or has civilization followed the line of moral sense, and the line of the æsthetic, and the line of the good, the true and the beautiful?—for these have been the three angels that have led men up, step by step, in power, in abundance, and in happiness.

Or, looking at it in another point of view, what classes are they in the community that are prospering most? Single men there seem to be who rush along the road of prosperity, and succeed, not by moral law, but in spite of moral law. I shall not discuss their cases. Their end is to be the judge. But, taking classes, what class in the community is it that is the most prosperous! Are the men who sacrifice everything to their appetites and passions as a general

thing the most prosperous men ? The men that lie ; the men that forswear themselves ; the men that are niggard of benevolence ; the men that live for themselves ; the men of the coldest hearts and the least benefactions ; the men that are the most purely selfish—are these the men that prosper, as classes, best ? Is it not the public opinion of every village, that the virtuous, the industrious, the frugal, the true, are the ones that thrive ?

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

It is not the kingdom of this world. Follow the development of classes, and notice the higher morality in a man. There is not a man who has a thousand lots on the edge of Brooklyn who would not build a church and a school-house on them. He says, “I do not care for religion ; I do not care whether the church is Episcopalian or Presbyterian or Methodist ; I do not care who runs it ; but I want the church.” Why do you want it ? “Because it will enhance the value of my property.” Even dirt goes up in value under such circumstances.

I suppose that there is no class among us that more exemplify a certain principle of the words of the Gospel than the Quakers. Their houses and their lands are proverbial ; and they themselves, as a general rule, have the look of the meek. They look as though they had possessed the earth ; and a very fat earth, too. They are generally persons who thrive, who live at peace, who are universally respected ; and they do extract as much honey from this great world-flower as any other class of people in the whole community. And is it not irresistibly evident that their prosperity is the natural effect of a cause—the moral ideas that they are living on ? And does not the one flow in the train of the other ?

Take those sects that are most rigid. Take, for instance, the Calvinists of New England. Persons rail at them ; but they were men that believed in their doctrines. They put God first, the commonwealth next, and the citizen next ; and they lived accordingly. And where do you find prosperity that averages as it does in Switzerland and Scotland and New England ? Men may rail as much as they please ; but there are the facts. There is the old New England territory, so naturally thin and cold and sterile that ordinary men would have starved on it ; and it took the Calvinists to cultivate it. There was that in them which put steel on the edge of their every instrument, and made it cut. They brought to bear industry, and the sternness of the doctrines of God, and the stimulus of the divine impulse, on all the purposes of their life ; and they redeemed the wilderness, and built a structure of government such as never was built anywhere else. Thorough-blooded were they ; and the blood

of the Yankee has been the salvation of the continent. You do not like to believe that. It does not make any difference whether you do or not, there is the fact. If you go to the extremest borders of our country, even on the northwest, the west, or southwest, and find a man that takes the lead in education, he is a Yankee—or his wife is. If you find a man that manages a bank, he is a Yankee. If you find a man that is an engineer or a manager on a railroad, he is a Yankee. If you find a man in a position that requires foresight and calculation, he is a Yankee. I do not mean to say that there are no others in such positions; but the fact is so general that there is a philosophy deducible from it. You will find that everywhere the calculating, methodical Yankee brain is developing and systematizing the resources of the country, and making it strong and rich. You may damn the Yankee as much as you please, but it has been that Calvinistically bred Yankee brain that has made the foundations of this government firm and secure. It was the Yankee conscience that smote the devil of slavery and destroyed it; and it is the Yankee heart that will build school-houses all over the land, and defend the poor and weak, and make justice the stability of our times. And righteousness will rain down on future generations in this land, not because these men were Yankees, but simply because they obeyed the divine injunction,

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

A nation that has faith in that, and that puts moral principle higher than anything else, will suffer for it, and will have dark times, and revolutions, it may be, but, after all, it is a fact which is corroborated by history, that they who seek God's kingdom and righteousness, shall have everything else in over-measure.

There is a lesson in this to every young man. There is a lesson in it to those who are preparing to launch their bark on the sea of life. There is a lesson in it to those who look upon the ill-gotten success and temporary prosperity that will fall rotten to the ground. If you do not believe in the Word of God, then take your interpretation from history, and you will find that on an average, through multitudes, and from age to age, he who uses his reason most clearly, and his moral sense most fruitfully, and his conscience most persistently, will have all lower blessings in the greatest abundance.

Once more, we shall see the compass by which men steer in trouble. When the prosperity of a man is interrupted, then the devil comes behind him and whispers, “Save yourself. A little obliquity, a little yielding to custom, will save you.” When integrity is beckoning him, and the world on the other side is making fair

promises, then the devil says, "This is the way to prosperity—to go down; to sacrifice to the flesh, to the pocket, to lust, and to dishonor." "No," says the voice of God, "if there is any time when a man must stand for himself and for his manhood, and keep his hands clean, and his heart pure, it is when things are going against him. They will only go that way a little while. In the end everything will serve an honest man." Such is God's decree. All the universe is helping a man to be manly who will only help himself. And at these very times when you are tempted to give up principle for the sake of worldly things, the voice of God comes to you, saying, "Seek first my kingdom and its righteousness. Be an honest man, a true man, a bold and strong man. Stand up, and hold yourself back from destruction, if you do not your property. Keep yourself floating, and everything else will come by and by." A man that has lost himself, and saved his property, has saved nothing; but a man who has saved himself, though he has lost his property, has saved everything that is worth saving. It is that which is inside of a man, and not that which is outside of him, that determines value.

How long shall it be before the world will learn these simple truths? How strange it is to hear them announced by the Peasant of Galilee—by this Mechanic—laboring among the working men of his time! Jesus, standing and looking on the toilers of the sea (of the Lake of Gennesaret), and surrounded by the crowds of working people, in this matchless discourse, announced principle after principle, with all the brevity of an axiom, and in parabolic forms, which for two thousand years the world has been slowly finding out to be true. Whence came this wisdom that anteceded experience? Whence came this regency of mind that overlooked the lives of men and the courses of time? To me he was not a peasant, but it was only a peasant form that he wore. To me he was not a genius of moral ideas, but the Author of them—the Father of thought, and the Father of history, clothed with the flesh, that he might know his own household, or that they might learn to know him. He stood there—he that from his glorious estate in heaven had bowed himself down to dwell among men, that he might save them; and from his lips how fitly fall these maxims that have created the world and its prosperity, and that will yet bring the world to its millennial glory!

Men and brethren, let us take heed to these teachings of God's providence, to these teachings of God's word, and to our own experience in them. Whatever else we give up, let us hold steadfastly to our faith in that providential government which supervises all our ways; to our faith that the laws on our side are those that will lead us highest and nearest to God; to our faith that if we "seek

first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," we shall be in the line of that providence which makes up the deficiencies of our mortal reason, which guides our weak will, which guards us, and which will finally save us.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We adore thee, thou that art highest and best, our God and our Father. We adore thee for what thou hast manifested thyself to be—for all the glory which thou hast shed abroad upon the earth; for all the mercy which thou hast vouchsafed to man; for the revelation of thyself in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; for all the truth which has come from him, and by which the Holy Ghost has been brought home to us. We rejoice in thy government. Thy laws are holy, and just, and good. There is peace in pursuing the paths of righteousness. We rejoice in our experience of thy goodness. How much should we rehearse the story of our life! What argument of trust and gratitude there is in it! We rejoice that we were reared under Christian auspices, and from our earliest life taught the things which pertain to salvation. We thank thee that thou hast granted unto us so much of the joys of life, and that sorrows have been ministered unto us mercifully, and that thou hast made them to be a discipline, and not a destruction. We thank thee that thou hast drawn us together into the fellowship of the Gospel, and that we have so many hopes in common, so much of the life that now is, irradiated by the life which is to come.

We rejoice in all the mercies which thou hast vouchsafed to us in the household—its sweet affections, and all its blessed light. And we beseech of thee, O Lord our God! that since thou hast sustained us thus far, our cup running over, our lines falling in pleasant places, our feet in green pastures, and by the side of still waters, we may learn from all the past, more than ever to rest in thy word; to lean wholly upon thy promises, to walk securely and safely and restfully in the way of duty. Why should we be disturbed with care, with pain, or with burdens? Why should we, over whose head springs the arch of our Father's house, act as slaves, and look up affrighted, or bow down drudged? Art thou not our Lover and our Friend? And when thou judgest, is it not love? And when thou dost smite, is it not still the Father's hand? And is not all our life a varied experience of the blessedness of thy government for our soul's good. Grant that we may more and more treat thee as children, since we are treated by thee as a Father. And we pray more and more that the life that is in us may abound in things right and true and good. May we seek to please thee above all others.

And grant, we pray thee, that every one in thy presence may be led to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ. May there be awakened in every one a spiritual insight. May every one that has never before known faith, have the beginnings of that life which comes by faith and by love.

We pray that thou wilt grant that those who have long walked in Christian experience, that those who have been soldiers in thine army, may be true to the end. It is but a few days for many. If in patience they possess their souls, all their conflicts will be over ere long, and then there will be no more storms for them. Brighter and brighter shines the east. Grant, we pray thee; that they may have strength to walk to the end of life in an affectionate trust in that Redeemer who never has left them nor forsaken them.

We pray that those who are bearing the burden and the heat of the day may be strengthened so as that they shall fulfill all their duties as becomes the children of God. May they remember their vocation. May they remember the honor and the dignity which thou hast put upon them. May they not dishonor their Father which is in heaven.

We pray that thou wilt grant that those that are beginning the Christian life, inexperienced, full of mistakes, full of alternations of feeling, may know the love of Christ to their souls, which overcame their selfishness; which called them when they were afar off; which has been beforehand with them.

Grant, we pray thee, that they may never distrust the nourishing love of God. And may they feel that they are strong, not in themselves, not in their own will, not in the means with which they surround themselves, but in the Lord that loved them and redeemed them, giving his own precious life for them. In Him may they be strong.

We pray for those who mourn over their easily besetting sins; who fall so often; who come back so slowly; to whom the yoke is yet a yoke; and to whom the burden is very heavy. Wilt thou deliver them. May they not parley with the things that are behind. May they not look back, even. May they press forward, forgetting the things which are behind, toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt be near to those who long and hesitatingly have been looking wistfully toward the better life, and have not entered upon it. Oh! draw them. Bring them back to the right way—to the way of holiness; to the way by which they shall walk heavenward, more and more dispossessing sin and selfishness. Grant that they may enter upon the royal way, and that they too, may, become servants of the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

We pray for those that are thrall'd in sin. We pray for those that are bowed down and are slaves of Satan. We pray for those that are in the darkness of doubt. We pray for all that suffer through uncertainty.

We beseech of thee to remember those that do not remember thee. We pray for the prayerless. We pray for those who have no longer any on earth to pray for them. We pray for those who have forgotten their father and their mother, who are in glory, and their Father who is in heaven, and who is greater than all.

We pray for the poor; for the outcast; for those that are in vice, and neglected therein; for all criminals; for all that are guilty; for those that are in prison. Bless those that carry to them the word of truth, and cast a better light of consolation upon their path. And we beseech of thee that as they come in the name of Christ, they may bear the Spirit and the love of Christ. And may many be snatched as brands from the burning.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt bless all those who are seeking to build up the cause of temperance, and to promote morality in those that are cast down by their passions. May they be strong in word and in deed.

We pray for the reformation of morals throughout these great cities, and in all our land. And revive thy work, we pray thee, in all our churches. May the truth be more and more powerful. And we beseech of thee that justice and equity may everywhere prevail. Turn and overturn till He whose right it is shall come and reign. Fulfill those promises which long have hung unripening. At last, may they begin to drop down their fruit. We pray for that glorious day when men shall learn war and violence no more; when they shall torment and beat each other down no more; when peace shall be universal; and when purity and truth and justice shall rule in all the earth. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, shall be praises everlasting.—
Amen.

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our heavenly Father, we thank thee for all the monitions of thy word. We thank thee for all the examples which it records. We thank thee for all the truth which has through after ages come forth to corroborate thy divine annunciations. May we not seek the flesh. May we not seek the things that perish in the using. May we not seek that specious and glittering prosperity which is as the frost-pictures of winter which perish almost by the breath of him that looks upon them. May we lay up our treasure in heaven. May we send holy thoughts there for investment. May our hearts follow there those whom they have loved. May we twine our affection around about them. O, Lord of our salvation, there may we have more expectation, more hope, more desire, more that waits for our coming, than anywhere else. And as we are growing old, and the years that are before us are fewer than those which are behind us, grant that we may more earnestly take hold of these great verities. And may we live so convoyed, protected, comforted, and blessed of thy Spirit, that when we depart we shall pass from glory to glory, and be forever with the Lord.

And to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, shall be praise forevermore. *Amen.*

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